

Sketch

Volume 37, Number 3

1971

Article 3

Paraesthesia

Craig Parsons*

*Iowa State College

Copyright ©1971 by the authors. *Sketch* is produced by The Berkeley Electronic Press (bepress).
<http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/sketch>

Paraesthesia

Craig Parsons

Abstract

Yesterday our days were melted in the sun, Bled of their life stuff and essences into Gutters and sewers; and being nothing More than a sun-streaked afternoon, We should call it the last sighting Of the shadow of a shadow of a cloud, Sweeping past the hillside and the snow, Trickling from the weathered rock and cracking, Forming torrent-streams on mountain slopes, And tearing with tiny fingers At the tree roots in the land Merging valleys...

parity. The mutinous left arm began to explore the intricacies of the lower back. The "out to lunch" sign flashed on in his eyes. The torso introduced its many parts: Edentata, mammalian. . . . He paused at the curtain to peer at the audience. The mouth approximated a tiny smile. For a brief moment he stood there. Then, after much consultation with various parts of his body, he passed from view.

Paraesthesia

by Craig Parsons

Dist. Studies, Jr.

Yesterday our days were melted in the sun,
 Bled of their life stuff and essences into
 Gutters and sewers; and being nothing
 More than a sun-streaked afternoon,
 We should call it the last sighting
 Of the shadow of a shadow of a cloud,
 Sweeping past the hillside and the snow,
 Trickling from the weathered rock and cracking,
 Forming torrent-streams on mountain slopes,
 And tearing with tiny fingers
 At the tree roots in the land
 Merging valleys.

. . . round round, the rafters down.
 Rafters down and wires round,
 And so they've come to get me.

And the valleys were not hard to see
 The clouds that slipped between the openings
 And the closings, touching the branches,
 Nodding in the dull air and looking down;
 Their stiff, gray forms dropping
 Crystal hints that glittered in the sun.

Clouds and trees and lofty things
Looked down and didn't really see;
They held their breath while breathing,
Not knowing; how could they know?
They were clouds and trees and
Lofty things.

. . . round round, the rafters down.
Rafters down and wires round,
And so they've come to get me.

Blue their color, thinly green their
Transparent cool in shades and
Shadows yet by the tumbling waters,
Melting blood and snow stuff mingling
With the clay, sticking to the bottoms
Of our soles, sucking at our strength,
Lying with the mud-soaked trenches,
Aiming across the snow fields, impaled
On a lance tip and a foreign armor,
Shouted and refracted of the sun,
Glints on the nose-tip now
At the missile silo.

. . . round round, the rafters down.
Rafters down and wires round,
And so they've come to get me.

Snow was of another being and so were
Weeds and lofty things; their ways
Were not our ways, though through
The Darkened glass the snow looked
Black and lofty things were silhouetted
Out against the sky. Back alleys and
Cardboard signs, broken windows and
Crooked thresholds marked our way.
Buildings were in our way and lines
Of communication, always through
A wire or through a friend or through
The New York Times in paper pages.

. . . round round, the rafters down.
 Rafters down and wires round,
 And so they've come to get me.

Cardboard fences with four letter verse
 And tenement-dwelling art: epitome of all
 We were in four letters on a wall; yet
 We were shocked to see ourselves there
 Pinned and wiggling, splattered in the pores
 Of concrete walls and buildings in
 Back alleys. We would rather have
 Shelter in space below the roof, shielded
 From the dirty words and weeds and lofty
 Things silhouetted out against the sky;
 But communication required wire and
 Buildings imposed their form.

. . . round round, the rafters down.
 Rafters down and wires round,
 And so they've come to get me.

Rafters are not and wires are not
 So in holding to the ways of men
 And neon signs and Wall Street.
 Men speak to seldom understand
 The silence in between the words,
 The flashes, or the columned numbers in
 The sergeant's hand. Buildings high and
 Wires long, stretching past the point;
 Bare rafters, charred and bare, bars
 Across the morning sun; and wires
 Melted in a sudden flash of heat,
 Hotter than a star.

. . . round round, the rafters down.
 Rafters down and wires round,
 And so they've come to get me.